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Subsurface

By

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Bachelor of Fine Art, University of Wyoming, Laramie, WY, 2013

Thesis:

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Studio Art

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Subsurface

Beth Huhtala

MFA Thesis Defense Paper

My drawings and paintings are series of experiences and stories I have lived that are layered upon themselves and composited, rather than presented in a straightforward linear narrative. I am fascinated with exploring the human desire to tell stories. We share, tell, pass on, and trust each other with vulnerable and precious memories; but how do we share emotion? How can we share a complex unnamable feeling with someone we love, when our language limits us to a flattened and shallow depth of understanding of either one or the other, when what is real is a mix of spontaneous, delighted, anxious, irritated, and lonely all in one swoop?

In my paintings, drawings, and sculpture, I am directly responding to memories and stories from both my past and my contemporary life. I take specific moments in time, and deconstruct them, isolate and consider the different emotions, thoughts, feelings, and urges, and then consolidate them back onto each other to create a more complicated and yet compressed composition. I rely on color, texture, abstracted chimera-like archetype animal constructions, as well as cultural icons, like mouths, scissors, teeth, rubber gloves, etc. These icons and colors guide and invite viewers into the work and a spectrum of emotion.

My goal with the work is to create new stories and expand on our language and understandings of a full and whole experience. I was heavily influenced by the concerns and issues brought up by American writer and civil rights activist, Audre Lorde, who in her feminist writing, *The Master's Tools*, discussed the contemporary dilemma for people who desire to breakaway from this controlled and limited space of understanding. She talks of a fear to create change and in that fear a lack of 'tools' to expand the cultural understanding of who a person is. "Simone de Beauvoir once said: ..'I urge each one of us here to reach down into that deep place of knowledge inside herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives there. See whose face it wears. Then the personal as the political can begin to illuminate all our choices" (Lorde, 114). Of course, Lorde and Beauvoir were urging a shift in cultural understanding of norms and labels that perpetuate hate in our culture against the 'other.' Where this idea influences my work is the acceptance and expansion of the genuine conditions of our lives and how that does create differences between people; the places where the categorization and separation between people seem to make less and less sense. Within each piece is more visual information as you dig into the layers; being able to read each layer beyond its flattened and bright shell will feel like obtaining a more complete and deeper understanding of the whole experience. My intention for the work is to be an experience that when consumed whole by a viewer, is an indescribable encompassment of imagery. From scale, color, and modernist constructions it is relatable and its use of characters similar to those we all had growing up. This exchange and understanding beyond words is the complex contemporary narrative I seek in my process.

Storytelling and Contemporary tales

I grew up in southeast Wyoming, deep in the home of big rodeo, cowboys and western folklore. The west, for me, was growing up miles away from the nearest neighbor in big open

spaces. Stories and wildlife around me became my teachers and friends. I learned hard life facts from watching my sister's hutch rabbits be born, grow up, and die or be killed. There was no room for casual lies about animals running away, there was no ideal story or lesson in these actions of my childhood, but there was freedom in seeing this uncensored truth. Creating stories around these characters I saw daily was a simple joy growing up and I think a universal one.

Trophy (see fig. 1) is an earlier work I did coming into my graduate program. I wanted to create the mark that expressed beauty about this dead animal while isolating the abject. I left every intricate mark of the animal's fur and the empty spaces around it, and edited out what may be noted as dangerous, or grotesque. I learned a lot from making this series of prints. However, as I progressed, I longed for a story that was less edited and refined, and I wanted to make my own contemporary stories rather than perpetuate and retell familiar ones. I found my balance and my language in the past of fables and myth, and I used this launching point to propel toward my goal.



fig. 1-*Trophy*, 24"x36", pressed elk fur on paper, 2015

Creating human stories through the conduit of an animal body is a common practice in stories, myths, fairy tales, fables, and folktales around the world. In western culture, animals

have represented specific human characteristics and traits for thousands of years, and consequently when we see or hear of a rabbit and a fox in a story we are already sure about who is the 'good guy' and who is the 'bad guy' and how the story will end. (See fig.2).

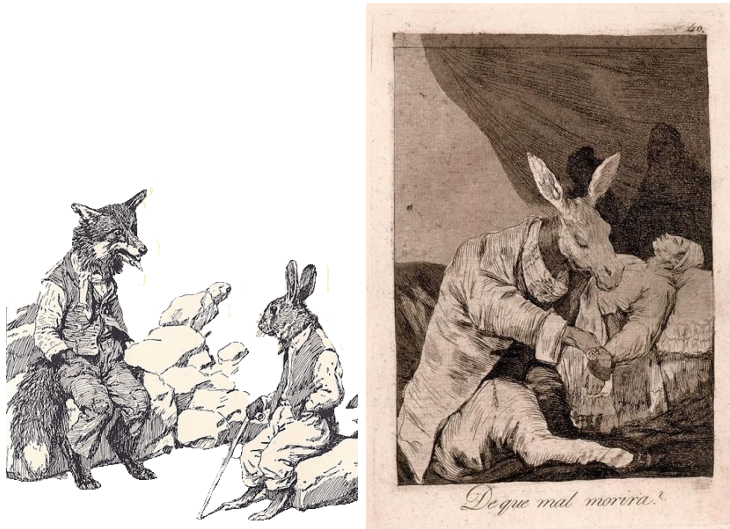


fig. 2-Brer rabbit tales, 19th century

fig.3- Francisco Goya, *De que Mal Morira?*, Intaglio Print, 1820

Animals are used in stories to make simplifications and become archetypes that play out similar roles for us over and over (see fig.3). Some of the archetypes I am investigating in my work are the trickster, hero, and mother. I find that the combination and influence of these three troped characters are the core of most stories in my life and through blending these characters in my drawings, I become closer to identifying myself.

Artistic Influence and Progression

When looking to historical influences in my art, I have found a passion in the abstract and postmodern works of Jean Michel Basquiat, Haitian American artist popular in the late 70s

and 80s. Basquiat's art focused on "suggestive dichotomies", (Hoffman, 129), such as wealth versus poverty, integration versus segregation, and inner versus outer experience. (See fig.4).

Jesse Reno, another artist I have looked into has developed his own use of abstracted marks and shapes to create pictorial language in his works. Tick marks and triangles specifically translate to larger and more complex ideas for Reno. (See fig.5 and 6).



Fig.4- Jean Michel Basquiat, Untitled, Acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 1984

fig.5- Jesse Reno, *Spider Rabbit*, acrylic and pastel on panel, 2011

fig.6- Jesse Reno, *Acceptance is the Key to Unlocking*, acrylic, ink, and pastel on board, 2011

When I look to the work Basquiat and Reno I felt an overwhelming desire to also tackle my own stories with marks, color, and texture and to place them out into the world for others. I think that my personal creation of these chimeras have both the potential to connect and create narrative with viewers and/or simply feel aesthetically pleasing without narrative. Both types of translations from the viewers are successful to me and my practice.

Lexicons

Similar to the artists that inspire me I hope to engage in a visual vocabulary in my own work of specific abstract marks and shapes to further develop and fill in what is missing in the

story. I believe these economic and simple lines and textures relate to viewers on a level of primal understanding and aesthetic. Small, short white tick marks, not quite perfect but lined up in a row, make a sound, like a shimmer or consistent dull tap. Three sharp dashes across half the composition strike a nerve and emotion that I believe cannot be achieved in words or figurative imagery. This technique is also a way for me to work through ideas at the rapid speed I desire and to create shortcuts to familiar complex ideas that come up again and again like so many problems in our lives. For example, how I illustrate the feeling of a missed connection is in broken circles that never connect, like long Cs. These symbols repeat themselves into a lot of my work without me having to draw new ways to express that every time. To a viewer that sees my work once, I understand the frustration in feeling adrift and lost in translation, however the reward for viewing multiples and large works, that cannot be viewed all at once, is the connection of recurring icons that blend and connect into themselves, making more and more composites of the work readable, familiar, relatable, and understandable. Though, like everything in our lives, it is evolving, developing, and growing all the time. I don't want to be the same person I am today five years from now and definitely don't desire to be the same painter. I expect this pursuit to translate and dissect experiences to last as long as I do.

My Process

"When we abstract an image through cartooning, we are not so much eliminating details as we are focusing on specific details. By stripping down an image to it's essential 'meaning' an artist can amplify that meaning in a way realistic art can't," (McCloud, 30).

My process is intuitive and active. I take in a story or moment from my personal narrative and fully flesh it out, by tugging apart my every emotion and connection to this interaction. Characters in my life become reminiscent of fable storybook characters. They morph into animal

conduits to play out roles and expectations that are culturally related to certain animals.

However, in this contemporary complexity, a singular animal body does not make a human conduit like it has in the stories I grew up with. My characters are chimera-like creations, taking on separate and unequal aspects of different animal icons. One can be gentle like a mouse character, and strike just as viciously as a snake, while having a rabbit's capacity to run and hide, all in the same physiological body. I am not using tropes and archetypes in a traditional or straightforward way like in the stories told for generations before me, but rather using what culturally we know all too well about these story characters and animals to give context clues as spaces so as to be more relatable in my work. By first making cultural reference to a common archetype, I can then create a new kind of character and challenge to my audience by morphing, mixing, and having my character perform outside the norm of what we are culturally comfortable with in that specific trope. I emphasize the idea that these are human stories and experiences by bringing in human symbols, such as hands, feet, teeth, and mouths.

Kiki Smith is perhaps the only contemporary artist I have returned to throughout my research since undergrad. My continued inspiration and fascination with her work draws from her flexibility and fearless handle with multimedia and new materials. Smith tirelessly explores mediums and allows her ideas to always be given the material they need verses allowing a skill set to define and limit her. The tradition of paintings on panel is clean and understood they are easy to know how to interact with as a viewer, they hang on the wall and there is a distance. For me panels are easy to understand how to fill, create movement and rhythm across the surface. This stability of form lent itself to deeper and longer subsurface explorations as is present in their density of information through layers, sgraffito, veils, and detail. There is a rigidity and sureness in a panel that is authoritative and at the same time just one thing. Smith uses traditional, as well as contemporary, storytelling to inform and surprise her audience. In, *Born*,



fig.7- Kiki Smith, *Born*, 68 1/3"x56 1/3", lithograph print, 2002



fig.8- Kiki Smith, *Woman and Bird*, detail, copper plate intaglio print, 2002

Smith alludes to a story we know very well, of a girl in a red hood and a wolf. Her version, however, ends differently, as a heroic sacrifice is made by the wolf representing nature in the young girl's realization of growing up. Smith used intricately printed images of birds to mask and hide her female figure in *Women and Bird* (see fig.8). In an interview with Michael Kimmelman of the *New York Times*, she described her relationships to her animals, "I dream about birds," she added. 'Birds are stand-ins for souls.' Over the years she has made many sculptures and drawings of birds, dead and alive, of nests, of humans and birds, of half-human-half-animal creatures, of animals giving birth to humans, I see animals as a natural progression in my work' (Kimmelman, 2006). Smith has taken what she learned from being around animals and what she was taught from myth and fairy tales to weave a creation of her own stories and work that is so familiar and alluring in our culture today. I also see these animal icons as a natural progression and a deep part of my process in my own work.

Symbols

I take from traditional and well-noted icons such as my animal imagery. Through folklore, mythologies, and contemporary stories, animal imagery has been a vital part of my experience and how I have learned gender behavior in American culture. The rabbit and wolf have been two extremes that have led me through ideas and behaviors such as, passion, fear, and desire. As folklore uses animals as metaphors for human experience, I use the rabbit, fox, snake, and bird as an array of possible personas through which to explore questions of desire, revulsion, and trust and how these might intermingle. The rabbit in multiple cultures is noted as a trickster, a symbol of fertility, and domestication. Around the world with some slight variations, for the most part a rabbit is a universal symbol of an animal that we must sympathize for.

For me the rabbit is a personal symbol I take on commonly in my work as a connection to my own self. Conversely, in folklore the rabbit often represents the trickster. Historically, the rabbit has symbolized fertility and domesticity in paintings and classical art imagery for thousands of years. Rabbits' presence in crucifixion imagery across western art as a symbol of rebirth, continued into images like the Easter Bunny, reinforces the fertility and purity symbolism of the rabbit. The rabbit is a feminine representation because of the reproductive iconography of the rabbit, the domestication of the rabbit, and the rabbit's docile appearance, and its defenseless position in natural hierarchy. In this case we would expect that the rabbit in folklore would make a perfect female character such as the mother archetype, however this is not the case anymore. The rabbit and female character have combined to elude to the ultimate trickster, "It is not hard to think of women who have pulled a trick or two; lying, stealing, and shameless behavior are not masculine essences. But one or two episodes do not make a trickster" (Hyde, 338).



Fig. 9- Titian, *The Virgin and Child with Saint Catherine and a Shepherd*, known as *The Madonna of the Rabbit*, Italian, Oil on Canvas, c. 1525 - 1530.

Chuck Jones, Looney Toons, American Film Still, 1940-1990s

Tang dynasty China, (618-906 AD) era mirror depicting the moon goddess Chang and Moon Rabbit

Lewis Carroll, *The White Rabbit* from *Alice in Wonderland*, English, 1865

As I was growing up, the rabbit was being revamped and shifting in its modern messaging. In contemporary iconography, the rabbit represents the male character moving into female tropes. Characters like Bugs Bunny, Peter Rabbit, Trix, even the Quiky the Nesquik Rabbit, all represent a male character that has the agency and access to traditionally feminine forms of power, such as manipulation, seduction, and deceit. This switch, which moves males into the female sphere signify deviance and create the deviant hero, or non-traditional hero who used cunning, trickery, and talking to get out of situations as opposed to male forms of power, like strength, bravery, or honesty. He is a deviant hero that is celebrated in shrines, on our cereal boxes, in cartoons, and in traditional holidays. Understanding the fullness of what the rabbit is already an icon for and understood as is an important part of my research and application as is the deconstruction/ reconstruction of this icon and others like him. I purposely use animals I am acquainted with and had a personal relationship with while growing up in the western United States. This includes animals like, wolves, coyotes, cats, fish, horses, rabbits, raccoons, crows,

song birds, etc. Understanding the cultural notions of these animals is my launching point in mixing and matching them to create and build on Carl Jung's archetypal stories with chimera characters I built from my own.

Audience

Putting the information, the emotion, and the energy out there in a format that first reads very comfortably is me asking the viewer to try and go as deep as they can--to get to know me and hear the whole story. However, in the end, a relationship goes both ways and it takes a willing viewer. I believe that if they invest, there is reward in learning and opening themselves up to something more complex and difficult, and I hope that my works give back what they can.

The works can seem evasive. However, 'evasive' implies something is being hidden or an audience is made to be distracted from the whole. From my perspective, the whole is an impossible thing for one to clearly and fully take in. Our memories are false, subjective and contextual, and rather than trying to correct a lack of clarity in others memory or perception, I choose to embrace its natural obscurity and to abstract my story telling practice. In this regard, I am not hiding anything; one simply must launch into the work for their own answers. For me, the whole story is there. It is hard to read, and a bit sloppy, but complete and open to anyone who would like to know and explore and open up.

Thesis Exhibition

Subsurface

Family dynamic is a unique kinship, in which people find themselves in a composite of stories we all know and share on some level. Digging deeper into these memories, like a subsurface exploration, my works launch from experiences I have shared with my family beyond

just a plain exterior into a more complete understanding.

Subsurface consists of multi-media works that negotiate through levels of composite imagery and iconography. My work morphs my family members into familiar western animal metaphors and gives them free rein in complex compositions to lure and flesh out their struggles and frustrations with one another. I give my characters personal agency beyond their traditional tropes, with the aid of chimera conduit bodies, bright playful colors, cultural iconography, and layering of textures and marks, I open up dialog with viewers inviting in their own experiences with personal relationships.

Animal bodies are still very important to my practice and communication to my audience. Similar to my use of them in my pre-candidacy I responded to and utilized cultural understandings associated with certain personality traits in these bodies. These animal characters are initially seductive and passive; however if the audience investigates they can see the flip in the animals' roles and question the relationships they thought were so familiar and sweet. By also slicing some of these bodies and making mixed and matched chimaeras of my own invention, I hope to create more complex characters where one animal body falls short of translation of the whole, multiples fill in traits and more complex people can be represented. In my thesis exhibition, *Subsurface*, I use these chimeric bodies to represent characters and motivations to represent the narratives and dynamics of my family.

The exhibition is broken up into three specific series separated by functionality of material and purpose. The series that immediately greets the incoming viewer to the show is a series of large scale works on paper hung from the top of the composition, allowing the materiality of the painted and marked up paper to flow and float off of the wall and creating a sculpturesque aesthetic. This paper panel series is called, "Blood in the Gutter," a reference to comic theorist, Scott McCloud, author of *Understanding Comics* among many other theory texts.

In his book, McCloud refers to the blood in the gutter as the subtext or visual imaginary leap a viewer can make when reading images next to one another. By seeing two or more images in a series viewers can infer the information not seen from what is present in the panels. I use McCloud's phrase to point at the challenge of reading this body of work, because from panel to panel, they don't have the relatable material to make easy leaps. The characters may not be exactly the same in size, rendering, or color, but there is repetitive mark making, icon, and a lexicon of emotional marks that subtly tie the works into the same spectrum and theme. I chose this series name because of the connotation of the word 'blood' which relates to how we understand our American kinship in the matter of shared blood.

The raw construction of the "Blood in the Gutter" series is unique in its use of display in the gallery. This series is the only works connected from the back with tape. These connections are not seamless and have an obvious and clunky nature i.e. tearing, bulging, pulling away to reveal tape, etc. I wanted this aesthetic to be part of the images as they come together to create their larger compositions to reference a story in flux.



Fig-10. "Unspoken, Unbroken, Thank You," 4'x3', acrylic, charcoal, graphite, and pastel on paper matrix, 2016

Many of these works have been pulled apart, reconstructed, and then deconstructed again and again, creating a more honest representation of these personal narratives and memories. The vulnerability and upfront display acknowledge possible gaps, false understandings, and incompleteness in what I remember as a real event.

The final feature of this series also comes from the paper panel quality and its ability to come together in irregular formations, i.e. the edges are not squared or don't match up perfectly. These irregular edges allow for physical shifts and separations of space that did not happen visually in the compositions. Characters seemingly existing on the same color field and space are physically separated by a step in the paper edge. This imaginary space that exists for one character and not for another means that one character can be lower in the composition than another one ever could; a foot or hand gesture cannot extend beyond the reach of other characters.

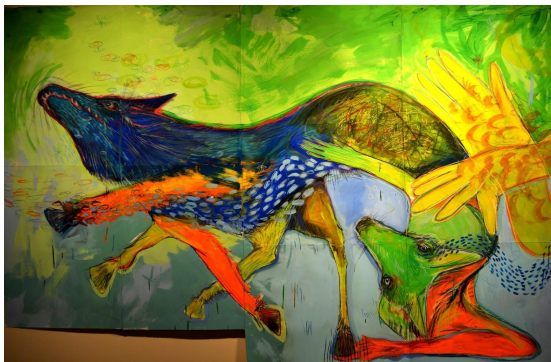


Fig-11. "A Healing Story, Frustration Pulling Away from Forgiveness," 5'x9', acrylic, charcoal, graphite, and pastel on paper matix, 2016

Fig-12. "Deeper Impulses Encourage Me to Just Leave You There," 58"x 72", acrylic, charcoal, graphite, block print, and pastel on paper matix, 2016

The largest paper piece in the “Blood in the Gutter” series is, “Deeper Impulses Encourage Me to Just Leave You There.” This painting is about my dynamic with my mom. With us, it’s all words; all we do is talk, joke, yell, call each other, or sometimes even write. Even though my mom and I seem to have no trouble communicating, there still are things we don’t talk about enough to work through. Many of the works in the exhibition have aspects of my mom in them; however, this one stands out in multiple ways. It’s the most minimal work in layering and mark making. In the piece a large, aggressive snake character rounds the perimeter of the composition, though, instead of a tail, the snake splits into two legs dangling from a hip joint. The snake’s body is see-through and is half full of a green toxic-looking liquid that mimics the lime green, eerie, flat background. The snake’s mouth is open wide and in attack mode toward two small mice, one a pale lavender color, the other teal with a second head pressing against the legs. One of the mice seems in shock, scared, and frozen in place, vulnerable to the snake’s aggressive attack, while the other pulls away and clings tightly to the dangling legs like a shy child at a mother’s side.

For me this piece is dealing with the realities of my mother’s alcoholism in my childhood. Like the snake in the work, an overwhelming feeling of helplessness would spiral her into drinking too much and becoming violent toward my sister and I. We are depicted as scared little mice, fending for ourselves, even leaving the other in the line of aggressive behavior to save herself. There is very little depth and space in this piece, though it is one of the larger works, mimicking the lack of understanding, familiarity, and trust I have in this specific side of my mom, but also the overwhelming and continued impact this still has on our dynamic.

This work is the only piece that wraps around a structure. Its division into two spaces references the historic use of continuous narratives that make it impossible to access the entire

story from one perspective: the installation of this piece is meant that you cannot encounter the aggressive nature of the snake and the reaction of the mice at the same time, either you approach from one angle and are confronted with apparently-frightened-without-reason mice or you see the aggression of the other character, but are now blind to the reaction or consequence. This encounter dynamic is mirrored in the way people see the trauma of others, getting a part of a story from one side of the relationship and neglecting the rest.

Another work from “Blood in the Gutter” is about my sister titled, “Can’t Meet Your Eyes, Struggling, Head Pulsing, Your Arms Are Heavy,”



Fig-13. “Can’t Meet Your Eyes, Struggling, Head Pulsing, Your Arms Are Heavy,” 3’x5’, acrylic, charcoal, graphite, and pastel on paper martix, 2016

This work has a large rabbit front and center that is being welcomed and held by another smaller rabbit poking its head from beyond the page and stretching out its impossibly long, veil-like human arms in a hugging yet trapped gesture. From above, a giant pair of scissors threatens to sever them apart, the larger rabbit has a worried look on its face as it gazes toward the audience, the smaller one seems unaware, its focus on holding tight. My sister and I are about four years apart in age, and after elementary school we never went to the same school at

the same time again. When we were younger in the isolation of our own home, we were the only people we knew for a while and were somewhat close. However, growing up became growing apart, and I feel quite separated from my sister, my other rabbit. Only since coming to graduate school has my sister made an attempt at getting to know me; she now calls and writes letters filled with optimism and future plans. However, like encountering by a very similar and familiar stranger, I struggle to overcome so much history and time. To me, a sudden flow of love comes off thin and more sticky than welcoming, like two tar arms trapping and pulling you down. As the larger rabbit struggles against its sister rabbit's embrace, it addresses the audience in a request to understand that what you can see on the surface is a farce. My rejection of love here should not be taken at surface value, because just below, this sub-story holds layers and layers of anger, rejection, and fear. In the painting this dynamic is obscured by the surface but still carved into the bodies and surroundings that these creatures live in constantly.

The next series in the exhibition is a small suite of ceramic wall sculptures, called "Worry Scarves." These smaller works are hung on natural wood pegs that seamlessly protrude from the wall, patterned like a coat hook system. Each work has two ends connected by an elongated body that drapes over the peg and hangs down.



Fig-14. "Worry Scarves Series," acrylic, graphite, and pastel on stoneware ceramic, 2016

The primary motif in this series is sculpted hands, ranging in styles and detail from flat plate like rendering, to clunky and aggressive constructions, to fairly stylized rendering. This range of rendering and treatment of the same symbol signifies the intent behind my aesthetic choice and its importance in understanding the icons. None of these works have a trompe l'oeil render to them where you might mistake your own hand for one of them. However, more stylistically rendered hands have a physicality and familiar gesture that is more like our own hands. The flat iconic treatment rather than the actual object references an idea.

Scratched into their surface and painted over their bodies are the familiar symbols, colors, and lexicons that are featured in the rest of the exhibition. In a very similar fashion these marks are informed by my personal narrative and create an opening for a viewer to come in and investigate and translate their own narratives.

I made these sculptures to investigate how worry felt. I was frequently called a worry wort in my family. I was upsettingly concerned for any and everything. It became a complex in my childhood and something I continually struggle with. This struggle reminded me very vividly of wearing a scarf, a seemingly non-threatening object meant to protect from harsh weather that could also become an aggressive strangling tool. To me worries are similar, all with the intent to create safety and protection but at the same time becoming potentially overwhelming while hanging on your shoulders. My intent with the domestic hanging system is to reference family and worries regarding being in the domestic home space. These scarves reference worries and concerns that have been put away, and hung back up; however, they have the potential to wrap back around my neck again, no matter how long they have been left unworn.

“Meaning to Touch, I Was Eager to See You Home Again” is one of the scarves in the series. This specific piece has a clenched fist facing outward, connected to a dog-like paw on the other side facing down relaxed. A magenta base contrasts with white teeth icons. For me,

teeth are a personal symbol of worrying. Dreams in which teeth were falling out uncontrollably haunted my childhood and still occur when I'm stressed. This specific story, like the rest of this series, launches from a childhood complex of being overly eager to give assistance. I was often waiting patiently on the porch for my parents to come home so that I could assist with the chores, not realizing that it could have been more helpful to just do them on my own. This co-dependence and closed fisted eagerness I felt related to the experience of a family dog, patiently awaiting its owner's return, a calm exterior while containing turmoil within.

The final series in the large space is a collection of panels; this series has no suite title. These panels relate and seamlessly coexist with the paper series; this separation is purely materials and exhibition experience. In one of the works for my dad, "My Favorite Collection," I brought together two characters, one submissive and dog-like, eager to play and please with multiple eyes on its face staring and watching, the other character is rodent-esque, silent and humble, with a stomach full of fish, a long cat tail, and many arms that reaching out and over the dog, picking at the eyes and creating a pile.

For me, my dad was a teacher without words; we didn't have long conversations or pep talks, but I did spend a lot of time watching him work.



Fig-15. "My Favorite Collection," acrylic, graphite, charcoal, and pastel on panel, 8'x4', 2016

I would accompany my dad doing chores like moving fence for the horses, putting up fence, or taking care of the animals. I wanted to help out, but not be a nuisance by asking a lot of questions, because if I did that he would ask me to go do something else. I learned from watching him carefully. It wasn't until college that I took some time to organize old family photos, and in a lot of the photos of myself or my sister and I noticed there would be this arm reaching in all the time--it was my dad's. I found pictures of myself standing on a chair or in a floaty toy on the lake where I am smiling brightly, looking into the camera and completely unaware of the safeguard hand holding on and making sure nothing bad would happen. By looking at these photos and thinking about this silence I often shared with my dad, I realized that he was watching me too, and our relationship has been this balanced dance of watching and caretaking of one another. For me, 'my favorite collection,' will be of the silent moments filled with these quiet, unrequested connections between my dad and I.

Moving forward I hope to continue an exploration of craft, material relationships, color and marks through a launching pad of personal experiences and relationships. Like telling stories, I imagine that this process is ever expanding and continuous in the same way our experiences and meanings shift around us. They produce an endless supply of content and raw material to translate and communicate to my audiences. I am still only scratching on the surface, exploring and digging deeper into my continued story.

"Underground, the story continued." - Richard Adams, *Watership Down*

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